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TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. — December 29, 1953 DATE

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	ACTION	DEPT.	
5 For Dept. Use Only	AA/A-4 REC'D 1/3	INFO	D S/R-2 C.I-6 E U R/X-1 I S I A-10
		OTHER	C I A-7 O S D-2 A R M Y-3 N A V Y-3

SUBJECT: Guatemalan Congress Removes Alfonso ORANTES as President of the National Electoral Board.

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In a further episode in the current wave of factional fighting among what the Communists call the "petit bourgeois" revolutionary parties supporting the Arbenz Administration (Emb. Desp. 533, December 21, 1953), the Guatemalan Congress on December 23 removed Alfonso ORANTES Valladares by a vote of 32-3 from the Presidency of the National Electoral Board for "notorious negligence," alleging that he had failed properly to adjudicate contested electoral results in November's municipal elections. Congress immediately elected Edmundo GUERRERO, a relatively obscure Partido Acción Revolucionaria (PAR) politician as his successor.

The official pretext for Orantes' removal was the report of a Congressional Investigating Committee appointed on December 21 on the motion of Julio ESTRADA de la Hoz, the PAR Secretary General. The Committee, working in record time by Guatemalan standards, reported that of 81 appeals to Orantes in connection with the municipal elections only eight had been acted upon.

The real reason for his removal, however (file) appears to be the rivalry of the PAR, now the largest Administration party in Congress, and Minister of the Interior Augusto CHARNAUD MacDonald's leftist Partido de la Revolución Guatemalteca (PRG). Orantes, once active in the PAR, is now a member of the PRG Executive Committee and the PAR leadership wished to recover for one of its own members the position of President of the National Electoral Board. The fact that Orantes has identified himself with the Communist line appears to have played no part in the action against him. The PRG newspaper Diario del Pueblo complained that in removing him the "PAR machine was perfectly oiled" and that henceforth the adjudication and certification of elections would be in the hands of one faction.

This is the third time in 1953 ~~that Congress has~~ summarily removed officials for political reasons, the first having been

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the removal of the Supreme Court Justices in February and the second the recent removal of Virgilio ZAPATA Mendía from the Supreme Court. In none of the cases was there a considered and impartial investigation into the allegations with the result that they have further undermined confidence in constitutional government here, a development which would scarcely be unwelcomed by the Communists.

FOR THE AMBASSADOR

William L. Krieg
Counselor of Embassy